

United States Senate

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November 4, 2005

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

On Monday, in an interview with the Associated Press, you said that it is "a matter of civic virtue" for families to make preparations for a disaster.

If that is the case for individual families, shouldn't it also be true for the federal government? If it is a "civic virtue" for a family to have a disaster plan – and for a small business to have a disaster plan, as the Department is also now encouraging – it is paramount that the federal government also has a disaster preparedness plan. The federal government should practice what it preaches.

Yet, I have still not received a copy of FEMA's disaster plan for an earthquake in California – even though I first requested it eight weeks ago. This leads me to conclude that you have no plan – that should an earthquake hit California, FEMA will not be prepared to do its job.

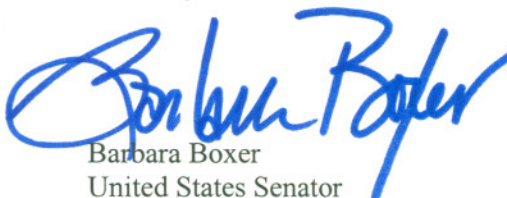
I believe that your Department should spend less time telling everyone else to have a disaster plan, and spend more time developing a plan of its own.

The federal government needs to be prepared in the event of a disaster. A family disaster plan does not do much good if the family is trapped under rubble from an earthquake, or can't get clean water to drink because an earthquake has ruptured the water lines, or can't call for help because cell towers and phone lines are down.

But, a disaster preparedness plan by the federal government can deal with those situations – what happens when people are trapped, when water lines are ruptured, when phone calls cannot get through.

If FEMA does, in fact, have a plan in the event of an earthquake in California, I do not understand the delay in sending me a copy. Please do so immediately. If no plan exists, please let me know why and when you will develop one.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator